



Number Five

April, 1960

BULLETINS TELL THE URBAN RENEWAL STORY

MOST of the local groups in business to improve their city's physical appearance and environment find themselves, sooner or later, in the publishing business as well.

An informal survey of materials from hundreds of groups in touch with ACTION shows that almost all publish some kind of information sheet, most of them on a monthly basis.

The bulk of the bulletins are sent to ACTION by the Group Correspondents for ACTION selected by their local organizations. These 1,300 organizations in 300 cities now represented in the Group Correspondent Program are committed to keeping ACTION informed of local activities. Their newsletters, plus letters, most often do that job. ACTION has found scores of ideas and techniques described in local group newsletters which it has passed on to hundreds of other groups either through the ACTION Reporter or through special mailings to Group Correspondents.

For More Up-to-Date Members

But the primary purpose of most of the local newsletters is to keep members of the local organization informed of city and internal affairs. Some serve the dual purpose of keeping members abreast of new developments and of informing official agencies and press outlets of the local group's work and reactions to official moves and decisions.

The most vital service which the newsletters are performing is the meticulous detailing of developments of local projects. General information on the need for and techniques of good programs to revamp the American city may be found in scores of national, state or regional publications. But the attention which the local organization's newsletter pays to the need for, the inception and development of specific projects in the city, the section of the city covered by the local organization (or the neighborhood) is seldom found elsewhere in any great detail.

What are some of the events which are "news" to these newsletters?



The job of improving our cities is a mammoth one, requiring the interest, support and participation of thousands upon thousands of informed Americans. "Informed" is the key word. Above are the mastheads of just a handful out of hundreds of newsletters being printed every

month by citizens organizations involved in city improvement work. The aim of all of these newsletters: To educate and inform members of the events and ideas that affect the environment of the block, the neighborhood and the city.

First and foremost, the bulk of the newsletters give wide coverage to the city's official renewal efforts, as it affects the organization's sphere of concern. A good many make frank comment on such efforts and action. Investigations and studies undertaken and decisions made by the organization itself rate high as major news.

Many bulletins report developments in individual neighborhoods in code enforcement. They list houses found substandard by building department inspectors and report what is being done to bring them up to standard. Some follow through to the court dispositions of code violators.

The responsibilities of various agencies and groups involved in urban renewal

are often featured in local bulletins. One newsletter, for instance, devoted considerable space to clarification of where responsibility for sidewalk repair lies. Some publish texts of codes and ordinances to give members first-hand knowledge of the legal tools their city has at its disposal — this often to point up inadequacies in the law. One bulletin, to underscore a public action in which the local group consisted, gave two pages to pictures and texts describing loss acquired by the land clearance commission to give industry some needed elbow room.

Local groups use their newsletters to boost membership and support. Some list the names and addresses of new members.

(Please turn page.)

Urban Progress Assn. Gives Little Rock A Vision and Guide to Tomorrow's Downtown

Little Rock, Arkansas—Three years ago a group of architects gave Little Rock a concept of what the downtown could one day be like. Today a group of citizens has given the city a revised concept, which takes advantage of recent building and improvements in the eight-block core area.

The plan calls for a series of green walkway-connected plazas (replacing the concept of a long Mall), "groupings" of buildings of related purpose—including this time structures recently completed or near completion—and location of a proposed intra-city bus terminal affording unimpeded pedestrian walkways directly to Main Street. All buses would circle the downtown district to compensate for not entering the district itself. Also suggested: an inter-city bus terminal adjacent to the new inter-state highway system.

Behind the plan is the Urban Progress Association, of which ACTION board member Raymond Rebsamen is president. The association commissioned the revision by a committee of the Arkansas Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, which originated "Main Street—Little Rock 1969" in 1957. Although offered as an "inspiration" and not as an official plan, the concept has been gaining much of the private redevelopment under way in the downtown area.

The Little Rock Housing Authority is now developing an official plan for the downtown, expected to be released by the summer of 1981, which incorporates many of the concept's features.



A concept of what downtown Little Rock, Arkansas, can be like now serves as an inspiration to citizens and as an esthetic guide to current building. This aerial view shows what the downtown may be like in 1969 and shows actual and anticipated construction.

At a recent unveiling of the concept revision, Mr. Rebsamen explained the role of the Urban Progress Association in planning tomorrow's Little Rock:

"Urban Progress is not in itself the agency designed to renew Little Rock or even to plan for the renewal," he said. "For those functions we have Metroplan, the Little Rock Planning Commission and the Little Rock Housing Authority. But Urban Progress is a force to suggest to those agencies the pattern of their work, to help them to coordinate their efforts and to ease the burden of their labors."

For more information, write to Mr. Jason Reuby, administrative aide, Urban Progress Association, P.O. Box 2211, Little Rock, Arkansas.

which make decisions affecting the group's interests.

The quality, circulation, cost and appearance of the bulletins surveyed varies widely. Some circulation lists run into the thousands, others reach no more than 200 people. Purpose determines the audience.

For the most part, the bulletins are offered free, although some set subscription fees. A large majority of them are reproduced by mimeograph, usually the least expensive method. Those produced by letterpress or photo-offset make especially good use of maps and photos.

There is an extra dividend from all these bulletins. They give well-deserved recognition to hundreds of tireless workers for city improvement whose names might never break into print in other publications reporting on their city's growth and development.

Verdict: The newsbulletins of local groups are doing an important job—and doing it well—in reporting to members and citizens the day-to-day opinions, findings and events that shape the city of tomorrow.

Community Group Donates 3900 Man Hours A Month

St. Louis, Missouri—The West End Community Conference has determined that some 3,900 volunteer man hours are donated each month by members to service 25,000 people in an area of 150 blocks.

Chairman Robert C. Voss gives the statistics in the Conference's Fourth Annual Report, which describes the various committees, their functions and how Conference members can help.

The 350-block area is a rehabilitation and conservation project and the Conference's zoning committee works closely with the city's Housing and Rehabilitation Office. During one month of 1979, \$81,000 was spent on repairs and remodeling of private homes in the area. On what members can do to help the committee: watch listings of rooming house permits, ads, and all materials that might give information affecting zoning and property usage in the area.

The Conference also suggests that new property owners moving into the area be contacted and acquainted with zoning regulations for their block. It urges members to look for and report any questionable practices of unscrupulous real estate operators, to watch for persons or companies advertising in violation of zoning regulations, and to report "For Sale" signs not carrying zoning information, as required in a new city ordinance encouraged by the Conference's real estate committee. This committee keeps a file of all real estate sales, mortgages and foreclosures in the Conference area in order to have a complete picture of all real estate activity.

For more information on this or other facets of the Conference program, write West End Community Conference, 950 Hamilton Avenue, St. Louis 12, Missouri.

We must not lose sight of the fact that cities are built for people, and that cities serve people, they are not functioning as intended. In fashioning our dream of the city of tomorrow we must look beyond the streets and highways and schools and stores and offices to the people who will live in our communities. Our goal must be to make those communities into places where a man and his wife and children can live and work and grow is happiness. This is the goal of our civilization. It is the only proper goal for an effective city.

Thomas R. Reid, vice chairman of ACTION's educational program, and civic and governmental affairs director of the Ford Motor Company.

BULLETINS—Continued

One issue of one group's newsbulletin serves as a year's directory, listing officers and committee members with their addresses and telephone numbers.

Has a member made an important statement? Has some committee member come up with a pithy description of a local problem? The newsbulletin is the vehicle for bringing these statements to a wider audience. Some print complete texts of speeches by experts on local or general problems.

Proposed legislation—local, state and federal—is detailed in many publications of local groups and opinion expressed on its relative merits. Some reproduce important newspaper articles or editorials. Some list recommended reading to further the city-improvement education of members.

One group used the back page of its newsbulletin as a petition. Another publishes a calendar of meetings of city agencies which are open to the public and